



**Barbie Zines in the
Barnard Zine Library
and Why**

Intro

We're the Barnard Zine Library. OF COURSE we have Barbie zines in our collection.



Whether you go to Barnard or an affiliated institution or not, you can look up our zine holdings in the Columbia Libraries catalog: CLIO <https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog>. If you type < zines AND barbie > into the search box and use the search limits to focus on Barnard's collection, you'll see what we've got. Some of the zines in the result set will be described in this zine, which was made for the Barbie movie screenings at Barnard College on January 24th & 25th, 2024.

575

Hampshire student Gillian Beck, writing in 2001 or so, issues three “Barbie reports” in her one-page folding zine. (That’s a zine made from one sheet of paper folded into eight pieces with a slit in the middle to make it open like a book.)

<http://tinyurl.com/575zine>



Each frame includes a haiku criticizing Barbie for her unattainable body, trashy taste in eye shadow, and for being “pure plastic sex.”

She counters the negative reports with one about her girlfriend (“gives me jelly bellies” and Boggle at which she will “kick your sorry ass.”) So, in the end Gillian may be intimidated by Barbie, but she asserts that she’s not so bad herself.

Barbie Movie Manqué

GenXer Ayun Halliday's experience with Barbie does not resemble that of the girls in Greta Gerwig's BC '06 movie, not even Weird Barbie (portrayed by Kate McKinnon CC '06).

I'm talking same sex naked
bellyflopping onto a waiting pal...



Scissoring so vigorous it sounds like
a wooden spoon banging around inside
your grandma's empty Tupperware...

<http://tinyurl.com/BarbieMovieManque>

SOMEONE HAD TO SAY IT.

Ayun regales us with tales of all the queer sex, group sex, and the occasional visits from a highly passive Ken her Barbies experience.

black & blue #4: Doll Parts

The pink cover of this special issue features a photo collage of dismembered dolls--mostly heads.

Author Linda Morris concerns herself with a copyright infringement lawsuit between Mattel and a dollmaker who created a Bondage Barbie. She reports that

“The judge dismissed the case because the doll didn’t seem to pose a threat to the sales of Mattel’s Barbie and as therefore concluded not to infringe on the copyright.”

Morris reports on other Mattel claims against Seal Press for using “Barbie pink” and Aqua for the song “Barbie Girl.”

Morris finishes with a potential copyright infringement of her own: instructions for making a DIY Bondage Barbie.



<http://tinyurl.com/blackblue4>

Hey There, Barbie Girl #2: Our Barbies Ourselves

Speaking of lawsuits, Hey There, Barbie Girl was shut down by Mattel. Author Barbara Kligman P '27, writing in 1994, calls on the historic Our Bodies, Ourselves (OBO) to explore the doll whose name she shares.

Like the readers of OBO, Barbara wants to know what to expect from her life as a woman.

“The transition from playing with Barbie to perhaps looking like her one day was really shattering to me. Here I was, a very pre-teen girl staring at her Barbie doll, thinking that I was going to look like that one day. At the same time I was left wondering how exactly it was going to happen.”

Though the introductory framing is one of a quest for external knowledge, Kligman and her contributors appoint themselves experts, writing as different iterations of Barbie, including Orgasm Barbie, Bashful Barbie, Prostitute Barbie, and Hypochondriac Barbie (who has a yeast infection). They also offer an advice column authored by a sarcastic and unsympathetic Barbie.

The doll is posed with acupuncture needles, with a condom on her head, in a full body condom, cozying up to a bottle of Jack Daniels, and, of course nude, other than a pair of knee-high books (presumably pink).



<http://tinyurl.com/HeyThereBarbieGirl2>

blinkmoxy #8

The teenage author, Sara, is an anti-Riot Grrrl punk, who disagrees with the idea that Barbie, with her impossible dimensions, is harmful to children.



Even so, she'd rather girls play with Sailor Moon dolls, who seem to have more on their minds than clothes and boys. She'd like Sailor Moon dolls to have noses, but mostly she loves that "they are empowered and angry and have a purpose."



<http://tinyurl.com/blinkmoxy8>

I Do Not Want You to Leave

The Barbie described in Jacinta Bunnell's 2004 *I Do Not Want You to Leave* is probably the closest of the Barbies considered in this zine to Margot Robbie's portrayal in Greta Gerwig's *Mattel* landscape.

"The colors of the Townhouse décor were neat and delicate, mostly glacial pink and dusty satin yellow. She had scores of garments for every season, ample hair accessories, several vehicles."

Writing in her 30s, Bunnell recalls, with creepy details, the passion she felt for Barbie.

"My other passions were nothing compared to how I felt about this woman. There she was on the shelf, within reach, pink paperboard coffin that kept her nearly dead until I unhinged her from her suffocating twist-tie grips, freeing the captive."

Bunnell assigns power to her childhood self that contrasts with the idea of Barbie-lover-as-victim.

<http://tinyurl.com/IDoNotWantYouToLeave>

Mischa #1

This 1990s zine is authored by Natascha, a teen from San Pedro, California, back from time spent in Germany.

Natascha interviews her 10-year-old sister Daniela about Barbie. Daniela isn't impressed. Here are a few of their exchanges:

n: do you think BARBIE is pretty?

d: no.

n: why not?

d: she wears to much makeup.

n: arEe you attracted to the artificialness of her features?

d: sort of.

n: Are you aware that it is impossiblE to look like BARBIE in real life?

d: yes.

Although she sees the danger in Barbie's perfection, Natascha loves Barbie. She admires her sister's indifference, though she can't muster it herself.

Yes, I love that damn doll dearly. I still remember what my very very first one looked like. She had short blonde hair and this nifty yellow pants-outfit with a sheer cape. (It was the 70's). I just wish she had been a little shorter, had had a little more meat on her... fuck, she could have at least had measurements that existed in nature. If she had, I probably wouldn't have a lot of the insecurities I have running around in my head.

<http://tinyurl.com/mischazine>

Mischa #2

Natascha is back in a second issue with a long essay on Barbie's relationship with Ken.

The page is decorated with curlicues, a cursive Barbie for Girls logo and Barbie bandages. The last, perhaps, are to protect Barbie's broken heart.



In the essay, Barbie doesn't want to have sex with Ken. She tells him, "it's a very complex and complicated emotional and mental issue, not to mention an insecurity, and I'm carrying around a shitload of baggage pertaining to it that I doubt you would want to deal with."

She goes on to detail her sexual history, including when her "hymen got the ax" and her devastating relationship with the previous Ken. Finally, this Ken responds,

Ken: "No honey, nothing's wrong. I completely understand your feelings. Really I do."

and never calls her again.

Velvet Grass Bathroom Reader

Rebecca Dillon is a mom in her early 20s. Her “bathroom reader,” published in 1998, is a sort of greatest hits of her long-running zine Velvet Grass.

She ends the edited volume with a comic about Barbie. Dillon appears to be very concerned about the doll’s health--and is prepared to take drastic actions to resuscitate Barbie.



Many of our zine authors have issues with Barbie’s gravity defying measurements, but Dillon’s response is the most aggressive, perhaps speaking to her mama bear reactions as a parent to a young child.

Karin and Elizabeth in Clubland

In Karin and Elizabeth in Clubland, our girl Gillian from 575 is back and writing her thesis on social uses of Barbie.

The zine tells the story of two Barbie knockoffs--Elizabeth and Karin--meeting at a club through a series of captioned art/porn photocopies of the dolls. Small private college students, amirite?



Honestly, someone could probably write a thesis just on how these dolls are rendered by 20th century reprography.

The main thing you need to know about Gillian is that she and her college girlfriend, another zine maker, Theresa Molter, are still together 25 years later!



Gillian's two knockoff Barbies fall in love at the club.

<http://tinyurl.com/karin-elizabeth>



I've shared a little taste of Barbie content in zines in the Barnard Zine Library that I hope will pique your interest in zines as research resources.

Even through these tiny snapshots, we can make observations about how girls, women, and non-binary people have responded to pop culture phenomena like Barbie dolls and the Barbie movie.

Ayun Halliday reminds us of something presumably every Barbie hater knows: Barbie is a SEXPOT. Did our parents know that, too? Do historians? What other nuggets about youth, girl, activist, and other subcultures can be gleaned from reading and analyzing zines?

Is it surprising to learn that many girls were aware, in real time, of the harm done by the people who created a doll that reflects zero to none of the population's physiques and a smaller percentage's hair, eye, and skin colors? I'm particularly intrigued by young Natascha's complex portrait of a Barbie in emotional distress over a bad break-up with Ken

Which stories spark something in you?

Credits

- Barbie typeface from [Text Studio font generator](#).
- Stapler from China, so we won't order any more.



- The reason we bought the stapler to begin with is for its swing arm--that means it can be used to staple zines. And it's pink.
- Barnard Barbie sticker from the Design Center.
- I wrote to all of the creators for permission to use their work. I couldn't find all of them, so if you are one of the authors and want your page removed (or corrected), let me know!
- Thanks to the Barbie movie organizing crew for inviting me to make this zine. xojenna